

Compulsory Voting in Australia

Assessment task

ESSAY

Due: Thursday 20th of November

TASK: Compose an essay in response to the following statement.

“Australia benefits from compulsory voting.”

Evaluate this statement

Evaluate: This means you should weight up the statement. You need to consider each aspect referred to in the statement, commenting on the strengths and weaknesses, or overall effects of what is being discussed. An evaluation requires a judgement or measure on your part.

Your essay should:

- conform to the essay writing structure presented to you in class
- contain evidence of your research
- contain a proper bibliography, adhering to academic conventions
- contain a minimum of 800 words

You will be marked on these criteria:

- Level of understanding of the issue of compulsory voting
- Ability to use examples to support the responses
- Ability to construct a clear and relevant essay
- Spelling and grammar

Assessment Criteria

	Ex.	V.G.	Good	Satis.	Poor	Not Shown
Level of understanding of the issue of compulsory voting (8 marks)						
Ability to evaluate arguments and maintain a clear line of reasoning. (5 marks)						
Structure and Presentation: - Ability to construct a clear and relevant essay - Spelling and grammar (3 marks)						
Correct referencing and bibliography (2 marks)						

TOTAL: /20

Introduction

The electoral roll is a list of all people who are registered to vote in Australian elections. In Australia, all citizens over the age of 18 must enrol to vote. It is compulsory by law to enrol and compulsory by law to attend a polling place at election time.¹

Seventeen year olds may provisionally enrol and will be able to vote if their 18th birthday falls on or before polling day.

- Enrolment and voting in federal elections was voluntary from 1901.
- Permanent electoral rolls were established in 1908.
- Enrolment became compulsory in 1911.

Queensland was the first State to introduce compulsory voting in 1915. Compulsory voting for Federal elections was introduced in 1924 and first used in the 1925 elections where 91.31% of the electorate cast a vote.

Enrolment and voting for Aboriginal people became compulsory in 1984.

Other countries which have some form of compulsory voting are:

- Argentina
- Austria
- Belgium
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Cyprus
- Dominican Republic
- Egypt
- Greece
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Liechtenstein
- Luxembourg
- Panama
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Switzerland (some cantons only)
- Uruguay
- Venezuela

The only non-Australian citizens eligible to vote at federal elections in Australia are:

- British subjects who were on a Commonwealth electoral roll before 26 January 1984, at which time the eligibility requirements were altered.

The following people are not entitled to enrol and vote:

¹ Farnsworth, M. (2008). **Compulsory Voting in Australia** [online] . Available from: <http://www.australianpolitics.com/elections/features/compulsory.shtml> [accessed 5/11/2008].

- prisoners serving a sentence of five years or more
- people who have been convicted of treason and not pardoned
- people who are incapable of understanding the nature and significance of enrolment and voting

Compulsory voting: advantages and disadvantages²

Critics say that compulsory voting is undemocratic, that it illustrates a tendency for over-government, that it is unfair for voters who have no preference between the parties, that it has made life easier for the parties than it should be, that it causes parties to ignore their safe electorates, and that it forces to the polling booth those whose views are not worth having and whose votes tend to increase the informal tally. To those concerned that the abolition of compulsory voting would see a drop in turnout, the critics point to what they describe as 'healthy' turnouts in other democracies which have voluntary voting systems.

Defenders of compulsory voting say that it increases turnout, and in doing so helps legitimise governments in Australia. They also speak of the many obligations that Australians are required to undertake, such as paying taxes or serving on juries, and ask why voting should be regarded any differently. It is claimed that in nations where voting is voluntary, a great deal of party activity (and cost) in elections is devoted to getting out the vote rather than engaging in public debate. Supporters also refer to the familiarity of compulsory voting for Australians, and ask why something that has worked well for over 80 years should be abolished.

What impact does compulsory voting have on Australian politics?

What might be the consequences of its removal from Australia's electoral arrangements? The debate focuses on turnout, informal voting and the impact on parties.

Academic analysis shows that compulsory voting is likely to produce a high turnout of voters, wherever it is used. There is no doubt that the Australian arrangements produce a high figure, for Australia's is one of the most consistently high turnouts anywhere in the world—an average of 94.5 per cent in the 24 elections since 1946. The Netherlands averaged a turnout of 94.7 per cent before compulsory voting was abolished in 1971, and a turnout of 81.4 per cent in the years since. A similar drop in Australia would amount to about 1.5 million fewer voters in a national election. In the older democracies that have voluntary voting, the turnout has usually been in the order of 70 to 80 per cent, though in recent elections such countries have actually experienced a marked decline in turnout.

Critics of compulsory voting have claimed that an increase in informal votes in recent elections is an indication of voters reacting against compulsion by choosing to leave their ballot papers unmarked. It is impossible to be certain about why a voter chooses not to mark a ballot paper, though Australian Electoral Commission studies have shown that it is defective numbering that has been the major cause of informals, rather than the voter leaving the paper unmarked.

Some analysts believe that conservative parties tend to be the most favoured by low turnouts of voters—in Australia more Labor voters would stay away from the polls than Coalition voters. The Australian evidence is inconclusive, however. Compulsory voting has been used for many decades, and after such a long time in use no group

² Bennett, S. (2008). Compulsory voting in Australian national elections [online]. Available from: www.aph.gov.au/library/Pubs/RB/2005-06/06rb06.pdf [accessed 5/11/2008].

or party can be sure of how, or if, it would be affected by the abolition of compulsory voting.

Although some Australians no doubt resent having to attend a polling place, opinion polls have long shown that there is a solid amount of community support for compulsory voting. Might there be a voter backlash if it were to be removed?

Are there any grounds for reforming the compulsory voting arrangements, rather than removing them from the legislation completely? Reform suggestions that have been made include: the clarifying of what 'compulsion' actually means, the recognition that some people may be conscientious objectors, the placing on the ballot paper of an 'abstention box' for people who reject all candidates, the introduction of optional preferential voting, allowing voters over the age of 70 to abstain, and not requiring a vote by people living a great distance from a polling booth.

YEAR 9 HUMANITIES ESSAY WRITING HINTS

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Interpretation

1. Directive Verb - each essay question always begins with a directive verb. A list with definitions is provided below:

Analyse: show the essence of something by breaking it down and examining each part critically. Propose an argument that shows how each part is related.

Compare: Describe the similarities and differences between two or more things.

Contrast: Show the differences between two or more things.

Describe: say what something is like by using information from available data. Your description could list a number of points, including characteristics, events and /or arguments.

Discuss: Investigate or examine something by use of arguments, sifting, debating and/or giving reasons for and against a viewpoint. The strengths and weaknesses of an argument should be made clear.

Evaluate: This means you should weight up the statement. You need to consider each aspect referred to in the statement, commenting on the strengths and weaknesses, or overall effects of what is being discussed. An evaluation requires a judgement or measure on your part.

Examine: Describe what you know and understand about a particular situation.

Explain: Give reasons why a situation exists or a process occurs.

Justify: Give sufficient evidence to support a viewpoint or conclusion.

First consider the cue word:

EG:

“Evaluate the impact the Industrial Revolution had on England from 1750 to 1850.

What is your opinion? Did the revolution have a great impact in England? How would you prove this?

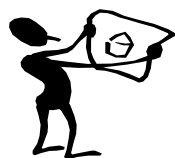
2. Key Words

Underline or highlight the key words in the sentence to you make sure you have understood the question.

EG:

“Evaluate the **impact** the Industrial Revolution had on **England** from **1750 to 1850**.

Notice that the words Industrial Revolution have not been highlighted. It goes without saying that the essay is on this topic and so these words become of lesser importance.



Planning

Once you have interpreted the question, you need to decide what evidence and examples you will use to support your description, analysis, discussion, evaluation or whichever direction is relevant to the essay.

For example, in the previous example the word '**impacts**' is highlighted as being important so how will you cover this?

Eg:
"Impacts"

Positive

- Ability to make more money
- Goods became quicker and easier to make

Negative

- Increased use of child labour
- Cities became overcrowded

To further support this, you should also add specific statistics, place names, prominent people etc to your planning. The more specific your examples the more knowledge and understanding you are demonstrating.



Writing

The old rules of English apply in Humanities too.

Introduction: where the topic is 'unpacked' and you indicate what the reader can expect to read about in the essay.

Eg: *The Industrial Revolution was an important moment in history. Whilst initially beginning in Britain, the Industrial Revolution was soon felt in all corners of the globe. Humans discovered and invented new ways to make their lives easier. For example, machines made work less labour intensive and the extensive canals made the transportation of goods much faster. However, the positive impacts of the revolution were far outweighed by the negative impacts. The overcrowded cities, disease ridden slums, use of child labour, and pollution from the use of coal meant that society was no better off than before the revolution.*

Paragraphs: each paragraph should begin with a clear topic sentence.

EG: *Before the Industrial Revolution began in about 1750, people lived in villages and were involved in cottage industries.*

You would expect the rest of the paragraph to be about cottage industry.

Conclusion: a clear wrap up of the essay, which restates the main points.

Eg: *It had become clear that although the Industrial Revolution was a turning point in world history, paving the way for the working world we know today, it came at a clear cost to the people living in cities. Shared living spaces, long working hours and little opportunities for the proletariat are examples of how the negative impacts of the*

Industrial Revolution certainly outweighed those positives during the period of 1750 to 1850.



Language Use

Be careful of the way you write in a formal essay situation such as the one outlined here. You should write in the third person (ie: It can be said rather than I think, It could be argued that rather than I believe etc). Also, be careful of being over emotive. The examples listed below are **not** appropriate to formal essay writing:

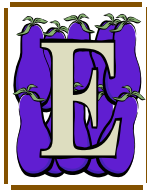
“It’s completely bad...”

“I can’t get over the fact...”

“He could have pushed the issue to the max.”

“It’s mind shattering that...”

Rhetorical questions have their place. But be careful about using them. They are useful as only use them when you plan to answer them, or ‘pull them apart’ throughout the essay. They are not useful when you put them in and never refer back to them.



Spelling and Grammar

Thesaurus: use when essay writing

Abbreviating: always indicate that you are going to do so and do it the first time you write the word!

Eg: *The Industrial Revolution (IR) was an important moment in world history.*

This says to your reader that from now on you will refer to Industrial Revolution as IR.

Citation and Bibliography

It is important that you correctly cite and reference the information you use in this essay. You are encouraged to do your own research, not just using the internet, but also using books and resources from the library.

Please go to this page from our library:
<https://intranet.wesleycollege.net/Library/referencing.cfm>
for more information about referencing.

Sample Essay Template

Having a good structure in your essay is vital for success. You need to plan before you start writing. You need to make an essay plan which contains your ideas for the contents of your introduction, your paragraphs and your conclusion.

I. Introduction

- Opening / Introductory statements
- Essay statement
- Introduce supporting ideas

II. Body

- First supporting idea
 - Transition, topic sentence
 - Discussion, examples, and analysis
 - Conclusion (optional)
- Second supporting idea
 - Transition, topic sentence
 - Discussion, examples, and analysis
 - Conclusion (optional)
- Third supporting idea
 - Transition, topic sentence
 - Discussion, examples, and analysis
 - Conclusion (optional)

III. Conclusion

- Transition, statement reflecting back on essay statement
- Restate key points
- Ending statement that provokes thought (optional) or provides a clear ending to your essay.